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New Study Finds Michigan's Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Population Up More Than 7% Since 2006

Michigan Ranks 5th in the Nation for Migrant Farmworkers Registered for Work

Lansing, MI—A report released today estimates the number of migrant and seasonal farmworkers in Michigan increased by 7.28% since 2006, with an estimated 49,135 farmworkers in Michigan at the peak of the harvest season.

The report, *2013 Michigan Update Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Enumeration Profiles Study*, finds that in addition to farmworkers, an estimated 45,032 farmworker household members live in Michigan during some part of the year, for a total Michigan population of 94,167 farmworkers and non-working dependents.

The 2013 estimate represents a 3.8% increase in Michigan's total population of migrant and seasonal farmworkers and non-worker household members since 2006.

"Farmworkers are critical to the success of our agriculture and food sector, which has a \$91 billion impact on Michigan's economy," said Mollie Schairer, Director of the Office of Migrant Affairs, Michigan Department of Human Services, and Chair of the State of Michigan Interagency Migrant Services Committee (IMSC). "It is not surprising that their numbers have risen, since Michigan's agricultural industry actually grew during the economic downturn."

Eighteen Michigan counties have more than 1,000 farmworkers and household members, concentrated primarily on the west side of Michigan. Ottawa and Van Buren Counties have the highest populations, with over 12,000 farmworkers and household members in each county at the peak of the season.

(more)

Dr. Alice Larson, a nationally-recognized expert on migrant and seasonal farmworker populations, authored the report and will host presentations to detail her research in three Michigan cities this week: Benton Harbor on August 7, Holland on August 8, and Grand Rapids on August 9. For additional information on these events, [click here](#).

Dr. Larson developed the study's estimates using federal and state agricultural and employment statistics, farmworker service provider data, and a "demand for labor" calculation based on the number of workers needed to perform various agricultural tasks. Included in the definition of farmworker are all seasonal laborers in field agriculture, nursery and greenhouse work, food processing, and reforestation.

The Michigan Department of Civil Rights (MDCR) secured funding for the study from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The State of Michigan Interagency Migrant Services Committee (IMSC) coordinated the research. IMSC is comprised of 26 state, federal and nonprofit agencies that meet monthly to assess and resolve issues regarding service delivery to farmworkers and their families. Telamon National Farmworker Jobs Program of Michigan, Jawor Bros. Blueberries, Inc., and the Community Foundation of the Holland/Zeeland Area provided additional funding.

"The state of Michigan has a responsibility to farmworkers and their families while they live and work in our state," said Leslee Fritz, Interim Director of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights. "We can't effectively serve a community if we don't know who they are and where they are. Having an accurate count is vital to ensure Michigan's migrant and seasonal farmworkers are welcome, safe and productive."

The full report is available on the MDCR website at www.michigan.gov/mdcr.

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